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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/23/2018
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SUBJECT: CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES RE-ELECTS JEAN-JACQUES TO
PRESIDENCY

REF: 06 PORT AU PRINCE 0088

Classified By: Ambassador Janet A. Sanderson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (U) Summary: For the third year in a row, the Chamber of Deputies elected Eric Jean-Jacques to the presidency of Parliament's lower house. The four deputies elected to other leadership positions in the Chamber are new to the executive bureau. Jean-Jacques' challenger for the presidency, Patrick Domond, privately claims there was fraud and bribery in the election process. The vote for the presidency split along the lines of two distinct coalitions that have formed in the absence of an absolute majority of any party. With Jean-Jacques' continuing weak leadership, we doubt the Chamber will be more organized or effective in the coming year. End summary.

12. (SBU) Deputy Eric Jean-Jacques (Lespswa/Port-au-Prince, West) defeated Deputy Patrick Domond (Lespswa/Jacmel, Southeast) by a vote of 55 to 35 in the January 15 vote for President of the Chamber of Deputies. Jean-Jacques has served as President of the Chamber since 2006. He spent over a month receiving medical treatment in Cuba toward the end of 2007, reportedly for prostate cancer. Also on January 15, the deputies elected Eloune Doreus (OPL/Mole St Nicolas, Northwest) Vice President; Gerandale Telusma (MOCHRENHA/Gros-Morne, Artibonite) First Secretary; Steven Benoit (Lespswa/Petionville, West) Second Secretary; and Cholzner Chancy (LAAA/Ennery, Artibonite) Treasurer/Chief of Administration. Chancy studied economics and is close to Senator Youri Latortue, the founder of the party 'Artibonite in Action,' and a very active Senator with Presidential ambitions. Benoit is an avid supporter and former brother-in-law of President Preval.

13. (U) Deputies Jean-Jacques and Doreus are members of the 'Group of 60,' a faction of deputies from diverse parties that have informally agreed to act as a bloc. Domond's 'opposition' group, numbering approximately 45, is the Coalition of Progressive Parliamentarians (CPA). Telusma, Benoit and Chancy are members of the CPA. As of yet, the two coalitions have not carried over their alliance into votes on legislation, but they do band together in matters pertaining to the administration of the Chamber.

14. (C) Following his loss, Deputy Domond (protect) asserted to Poloff January 18 that Deputy Jean-Jacques and former treasurer Deputy Maxeau Balthazar fixed the bureau election by giving special favors to deputies in exchange for their votes. Domond's examples included Jean-Jacques' authorization of car rentals and foreign travel for his supporters, as well as Balthazar's tendency to 'look the other way' in distributing per diem payments. Domond also reported rumors that Balthazar and Jean-Jacques offered certain deputies up to USD 100,000 for their votes. Domond disclosed that he is awaiting a report on the previous bureau's financial activities before going public with his accusations and bringing a formal complaint against Jean-Jacques.

15. (C) Comment: Rumors of corrupt behavior have circulated throughout Jean-Jacques and Balthazar's two years in the bureau. Similar accusations of bribery surfaced following their 2007 re-election (reftel). We cannot yet assess whether Balthazar's loss to Deputy Chancy is a signal that the majority of deputies are fed up with his favoritism and poor management of Chamber accounts. However, Jean-Jacques' reelection despite his poor health and widespread rumors of his corrupt practices raise doubts about the election's integrity. The larger issues are Jean-Jacques' poor track record as a leader, including his frequent inability to inspire sufficient deputies to show up for work to obtain a quorum. Post will emphasize with the new bureau, particularly the new treasurer, the importance of transparency in bureau operations.
SANDERSON